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# Descriptive Study of the Planning, Implementation, and Outcome of a Parent School Involvement Program

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Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND  
OUTCOME OF A PARENT SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

By Carol Mack

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of School Psychology

August 2006

**PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Dissertation Approval**

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Carol Mack  
on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2006, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is  
acceptable in both scholarship and literary quality.

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This dissertation project is in honor of my father's memory. He (Joseph M. Kretulskie) earned a 'doctorate' degree through a hard-working life to include a serviceman, coal miner, laborer, volunteer fireman and family man. He appreciated education and fostered my career with guidance and support.

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The Intermediate Unit and particular school district in which I conducted my project were very cooperative and encouraging with my endeavors.

Thank you one and all!!

On the following page I share one of my favorite poems. It perfectly describes and summarizes my personal feelings about why school and home could and should work together as well as why I chose the topic I did for my research that follows.....

## UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio  
And watched two sculptors there.  
The clay they used was a young child's mind  
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher- the tools she used  
Were books, music and art.  
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,  
And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled with touch  
That was careful, deft and sure.  
While the parent labored by her side  
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last their task was done,  
They were proud of what they had wrought.  
For the things they had molded into the child  
Could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed they would have failed  
If each had worked alone.  
For behind the parent stood the school  
And behind the teacher, the home.

Author Unknown

## ABSTRACT

Research verifies a positive impact on academic achievement based upon parental involvement with children's educational needs and school programs. It takes a sense of partnership between parents and schools to achieve positive educational outcomes for children. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the development, implementation and outcome of a Parent School Involvement Project involving parent-training workshops. While no statistically significant relationship could be found between improvement in student homework completion rates and parent attendance at school-sponsored parent training workshops, parents, faculty, and administration were united in their belief that the program was a positive and promising approach to improving parent/school communication with the possibility of fostering student achievement in the future.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Research verifies the positive impact on a child's academic achievement based upon parental involvement with their children's educational needs and school programs. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), Trivette and Anderson (1995), Griffith (1996), Faires, Nichols and Rickelman (2000), and Ho (2002) unanimously agree that parental involvement is an integral component to successful student achievement. Studies have consistently shown that every family has something to offer to increase their child's successful experience in school (Railsback & Brewster, 2003; Pelco, Ries, Jacobson, & Melka, 2000; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Vandrick, 1999).

Since parental involvement is positively related to student achievement, what can be done to increase and enhance parental involvement in their children's education?

#### *Purpose of the Study*

Research suggests that school psychologists and teachers should help parents become aware of the academic abilities and interests of their children by providing feedback on progress and providing programs that would nurture and support parental involvement (Trivette & Anderson, 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pelco et al., 2000). Before this can be done, there must be improvement or, in some cases, establishment of school-parent partnerships.

Parents' views regarding involvement in schools vary widely to include; feeling that education is 'the job of the school', truly not knowing 'how' to become involved in their children's schooling, sharing various opposing ethnic and cultural beliefs with regards to education, or having had adverse experiences themselves thus harboring

resentment about schools (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Ho, 2002). Even parents who wish to be involved often face barriers such as lack of transportation or day-care, language-issues, and/or time-management difficulties (Griffith, 1996; Finn, 1998).

Research confirms the importance of analyzing the needs of each district, and perhaps of each building individually, in regard to areas of parents' interest for involvement, meeting diverse needs, and providing adequate communication about available programs and services in an effort to establish school-parent partnerships (Ho, 2002; Griffith, 1996). Once partnerships are established, schools and parents working together can develop parent workshops to foster student learning and increase overall achievement and success within the school environment.

In an effort to assist schools in developing parent workshops, the present study attempts to investigate differences and similarities between what teachers and parents feel are important issues to address, accommodations needed to allow for parent participation, and possible benefits that could be expected as a result of parent programs. This study will also analyze data of an actual parent program recently conducted within a local school district.

### *Definition of Terms*

Parents and families are used interchangeably in this project. This author recognizes that many students live with guardians, extended families, and nontraditional families. Either term should be thought of as referring to those entrusted with the responsibility of providing a home environment for the child.

### *Review of the Literature*

Using a nationally representative sample of American households, Stevenson and Baker (1987) examined the relationship between parental involvement in school issues

and their child's school performance. This research concluded that to effectively assist their child with the demands of school, parents needed to have knowledge about their child's schooling and access to resources to help them within the home. The results of their random sample of households in the mainland United States included 179 children with complete information analyses. This research indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between the mother's education and the degree of parental involvement. Parents with more education were more involved in school activities. Also, parents of younger children were more likely to be involved in activities.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) also studied parental involvement and children's school performances. They focused on children between sixth and eighth grades. This study defined parental involvement as including, "their behavior with regard to school, through the child's perception of their affective and personal availability, and by exposing the child to cognitive and intellectual activities" (p. 248). Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) results, like that of Stevenson and Barker (1987), noted that parental education was strongly and positively related to the amount of involvement with their children's education.

Trivette and Anderson (1995) defined parental involvement as having four components: 1) parental aspirations for children's education, 2) parent-child communication about school, 3) home structure, and 4) parental participation in school activities. Responses from parents and students were used to measure parental involvement, and student learning was gauged by the results of a series of standardized achievement tests in four subject areas. The strongest relationship to student achievement was with parental aspirations for their children's education. Home structure (defined as family rules regarding school work and television watching) exerted a small but significant negative effect on achievement. The work of these researchers suggested that school psychologists and teachers should help parents become aware of the academic

abilities and interests of their children by providing feedback on the progress of their children and providing programs that would nurture and support parental involvement for adolescent educational outcomes.

Empirical studies of parental involvement and student achievement conducted by Griffith (1996) indicated that schools having higher levels of parental involvement had higher student scores on criterion tests. The test was a state measure of instructional standards based on competencies that the curriculum was designed to teach in reading, writing, language, math, science and social studies. Data were gathered from 42 elementary schools to examine the relationship between parental involvement and student academic achievement. Griffith also noted that educators recognized parental involvement in student's schoolwork as being an integral component to successful academic performance. The positive relationship between parental involvement and student performance was largely unaffected by socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic composition of the student population. Griffith (1996) suggested that future researchers consider providing transportation and daycare for school events to increase parent attendance, and to conduct surveys to determine other reasons for nonattendance.

Railsback and Brewster (2003) also shared research indicating that when families are involved in learning, students achieve more regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or parents' educational level. Like Griffith (1996), this research recommended providing transportation, childcare, and communicating with families by asking them how they would like to be involved in their children's educational program.

Faires, Nichols and Rickelman (2000) took their research a step further. Their study was designed to determine if parental training and involvement in the teaching of selected reading lessons increased their first-grade children's reading levels. They addressed the issues of parents' lack of confidence or skills to help their children with

reading. Parents in this study were given instruction at school to establish literacy within the home and received training regarding procedures to assist their children during reading sessions at home. The students involved in this study did in fact make significant gains in their reading level when compared to the gains of the control group. Research results did again reiterate the finding that parent involvement positively affects children's development and education. "When parents are given the skills and opportunities to help their children academically, they can become active and resourceful" (Faires et al., 2000, p.210).

This literature review about parental involvement raises an interesting and important research question: Since parental involvement *is* positively related to student achievement, what can be done to increase and enhance parental involvement in their children's education to foster learning?

### *School-Parent Partnerships*

Research by Epstein (1995), Griffith (1996), Latham (2000), and Ho (2002) indicated that the typical American family is quite different today than it was a generation ago. Parents and children spend far less time together, while in fact there is actually a greater need for parents to be involved in their children's lives. The amount of time available for parents to support their children's learning and interact with children is shrinking due to increases in single parent households, parental career issues, and complex family issues. The research review to follow suggests that schools respond by providing support and parent education necessary so that parents are aware of the importance of their role in their child's learning and development (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The key element of parental involvement that most benefits children is a sense of partnership between parents and school. Programs can be successful with an



understanding that it takes parents and school staff working together to achieve positive outcomes for children. Viewing parents as facilitators of children's academic development, professional educators can help parents learn how to enrich their children's lives through education in effective parenting, selection of appropriate outside enrichment activities, and proper utilization of the help of community health and social service agencies (Moore, 1991).

Information provided by the United States Department of Education (2001) indicates that research and practice have shown that children whose parents were involved in education were more likely than other youth to have positive educational outcomes such as improved academic performance, better school attendance, higher aspirations, reduced dropout rates, and increased graduation rates. Many professionals who sought to improve school achievement for children tended to concentrate only on direct service to children. Now educational professionals are realizing that parents play a crucial role in their children's academic development. Many factors influence parental involvement in their children's education. One important factor is the school's efforts to increase parental involvement. Advocates of parental involvement must look beyond traditional activities for new ways to improve parental participation. Schools are taking more active approaches to reach out to parents. Schools are establishing school-home communication links, including parents on school advisory committees, and establishing school-parent partnerships to provide parents with the information and training they need to become involved in school and at home. Schools that are responsive to the needs of parents have reported higher levels of parental involvement. Likewise, those that offered friendly and welcoming programs proved more successful (Christenson, 2002). Schools can function as a liaison linking families with resources and support that would enable them to focus energy on their children's educational needs within the home and at the school.

According to Joyce Epstein (1995), problems of educational achievement and academic success demand resources beyond new textbooks and computers. School and parents working together is one way to provide a caring component to today's often large, assembly-line schools in the twenty-first century. If schools view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family and parents as separate from the school rather than as partners. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children and work together to create better programs and opportunities.

Joyce Epstein (1995) describes two approaches to involving parents in the educational process. One emphasizes conflict and views the school as a battleground. Here, the results guarantee power struggles and disharmony. The second approach emphasizes partnership and views the school as a homeland. The conditions and relationships in this kind of environment invite power sharing and mutual respect and allow energies to be directed toward activities that foster student learning and development. (p. 709)

Epstein (1995) suggested that schools improve education programs by providing family services and support, parenting skills programs, connecting parents with other parents for support and encouraging parent/teacher communications. As a leading researcher of school and parent partnerships, Epstein noted six essential practices for developing effective partnerships:

1. basic obligations of families to provide for health, safety and nutrition of children;
2. basic obligations of schools to communicate with families about school programs and children's progress;
3. school responsibilities to reach out to parents to enlist participation in the operations of the school;
4. parents helping children learn at home;

5. parent participation in school decision-making; and
6. collaboration with the community to provide student access to resources.

With these components, schools can offer parent education and support in an effort to facilitate the educational development of young children (Epstein, 1995).

School, family and community share responsibility for the social, emotional, physical and academic development of the child. To foster cognitive and academic development, all other facets of development must be addressed as needed. School and parent partnerships can provide interventions to strengthen all aspects of the children's development and can also help parents connect with natural support systems (Davies, 1991).

Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, and Fenstermacher (1997) remind us that when parents are involved in their child's education, students demonstrate a more positive attitude toward school, demonstrate higher achievements, increase homework completion, and show improved attendance. Parents and educators often differ in their expectations of this collaboration. Open communication is therefore essential in order to work together toward shared goals in the educational development of all children.

Finn (1998) and Fry (2001) have confirmed conditions that can impact upon student school success. A major factor was the degree to which family and school support for learning is seen as complementary, rather than in opposition.

### *Educating Parents – Parent Workshops*

As a society we should be greatly concerned when parents are not active participants in their child's education. Participation in events and issues that directly affect children are the events that are often given the lowest priority. Schools can provide suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level, provide

information to families with health and nutrition issues, and provide workshops on parenting and child-rearing at each grade level (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000).

Christenson et al. (1997) shared information about a national survey of parents and school psychologists that was conducted concerning parental involvement in schools. Data were collected from 409 school psychologists and 217 parents. Although the sample varied, the parent population was predominantly Caucasian, middle class, married mothers. Findings included agreement between parents' interest and school psychologists' perceptions of activities related to educating parents about schooling, children, community resources and consultation about their children's learning and behavior. Among the implications from this study was that educators should consult with parents about perceived need and usefulness of activities being offered, and the fact that parents were concerned and want to be involved in promoting the educational success of their children.

A Yale Child Study Center Team in 1968, as discussed by Comer and Haynes (1991), explored parent involvement in two elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. The student population was quite different from that in the Christenson et al. (1997) research. In this study, Comer and Haynes (1991) worked with 100% black, low-income, kindergarten to fourth grades with 250 students in one building and kindergarten to fifth with 520 students in the other building. The Parent Program, which developed out of this overall 3 to 5 year School Development Program, focused initially on supporting social programs and then on the academic programs as needed. The team observed the natural pattern of parent participation in the schools and created three levels of parent involvement: level 3- general participation, level 2- helping in classrooms or supporting school programs, level 1- groups elected by parents to participate on School Planning and Management Teams.

Level 1 included a small group of five to six parents elected by their peers to represent them on planning and management teams in order to enable all parents to feel ownership. This committee addressed the issue of how the school could help parents gain information about support services for children in the community. A Share Night was planned during which community service providers discussed services and how parents could access them. This became a regular event for this particular district.

Level 2 parents naturally participated in day-to-day activities that included field trips, assemblies, parties, athletic programs and parent organizations. Parents often made classroom presentations about their personal lives, hobbies and goals.

Level 3 included parents who attended general activities such as holiday programs, fathers' breakfasts and parent programs. A planned effort to draw parents to school student activities was then followed with staff activities. Staff was encouraged to provide more good news about their students than bad news. Such interactions helped the parents begin to view the school as a good place.

The premise of this Child Study Team was that families and schools must work together to improve the psycho-educational development of the children. All parents can become involved and do have something to offer at their 'level' (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

The Comer and Haynes (1991) study also demonstrated that the conditions found by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) and Stevenson and Barker (1987) suggesting that parents with more education were more likely than parents with less education to be more involved in their child's school education could be positively altered. This study noted that all parents can and do desire to be involved, and do have something to offer on behalf of their children's educational program (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Research done by Christenson et al. (1997) looked at consulting with parents about the need for and usefulness of activities to foster involvement in the education of

their children. The research of Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) analyzed current district policies, programs and practices regarding parent involvement and assessed their effectiveness. Six areas of interest for parent involvement in their children's education in this national survey of school districts conducted in the spring of 1995 were: 1) communicating about programs to explain ways parents can help their children be successful in school, 2) training and support for parents, 3) reaching out to diverse families, 4) providing parents opportunities to be decision makers, 5) training and supporting staff to work with families, and 6) providing links to social service agencies to address family needs.

As a follow up to this national survey, 435 school district superintendents in 15 states across the United States were mailed surveys (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). Superintendents of 196 districts responded. This included 4,073 schools with 3,131,620 students. Elementary schools comprised 65% of the schools, middle school 19%, high school 13% and alternative schools 3%. The responding districts were diverse in geographic area, socioeconomic characteristics, ethnicity, and urbanicity. The measure included six questions regarding the existence of various types of parent involvement policies. Does this district: 1) Have a policy to provide opportunities for parents to be decision makers regarding school policies? 2) Communicate with parents about ways they can help their children be successful in school? 3) Reach out to engage diverse families in school activities? 4) Train and support staff in their work with families? 5) Communicate clearly with families about programs and their child's progress? 6) Provide links with social services and community groups to address family needs?

The most frequently reported policies were communicating with parents about school programs and their child's progress, and supporting participation of parents in making decisions regarding school policies. It should be noted that the typical parent communication of report cards and conferences were still most popular. Notable were a

low percentage of districts reporting training of staff to work effectively with parents. As front-line workers in school-home partnerships, teachers may in fact need training to work with today's diverse school and family populations before them (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000).

Research to gather issues of parental concern also included that of Ho (2002). Data were collected from surveys sent home to parents of children from kindergarten through fifth grade. Two hundred written comments were included on the returned surveys in response to the open-ended question, "We would like to have your ideas about the best thing the school could do to help you with your child" (Ho, 2002, p. 113). The four thematic categories were: 1) requests for more communication about their children's progress and needs; 2) requests for information on ways to help their children with academics, behavioral issues, and homework; 3) information about and consideration for services and programs that parents would find helpful in their role as parents; and 4) expression of satisfaction with the school's performance without any ideas about what the school could do to help them as parents.

Although all children benefit from parent involvement in education, Ho (2002) suggested that it appears particularly important for children whose families are economically disadvantaged or ethnic minority-group members. Teachers often assume that these parents are unwilling or unable to become involved in their children's schooling. His studies have found that these families do not know how to be involved effectively and feel that it is the school's responsibility to take the lead in initiating the collaboration (Ho, 2000). Too often parental involvement is initiated in the midst of a crisis situation prior to the establishment of a partnership relationship.

The need to reach out to diverse families by considering ethnic and cultural differences in parents' educational attitudes and beliefs, ethnically based attitudes toward authority figures such as teachers, and children's culturally based classroom behaviors

has been advocated repeatedly (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). It is necessary to consider the belief system of families and to be sensitive to the kinds of information and supports they desire to assist their children in meeting educational goals. Not all parents have good feelings about schools. Many had adverse experiences and may still harbor resentment or fears about school or teachers. Some parents may be embarrassed by their own lack of education or remember schools as contacting them only when their children were in trouble.

The research reviewed here confirms the importance of analyzing the needs of each district and in large districts, perhaps each building, as to topics of parents' interest for involvement, meeting diverse needs, and providing adequate communication about available programs and services.

### *The Power of Positive Parenting*

York and Cowan (2003) agreed that there is a need to reach out to parents about direct school related issues, social services, health needs and parenting skills development. They remind everyone involved that adults (teachers and parents) best serve children when working together (school and home) to provide consistent expectations and support, and that No Child Left Behind promotes parent involvement in their children's school experience. Fostering a common understanding of issues and goals, providing useful information, and connecting families to needed services can facilitate collaboration between school systems and parents and needed parent development (York & Cowan, 2003).

York and Cowan's (2003) 'reaching out to parents' concept is further addressed in *The Power of Positive Parenting*, proposed by Dr. Glenn I. Latham (2000). This book includes a unit about helping children achieve in school. It is noted that children, being children, rarely appreciate the value of a good education. Dr. Coleman, a renowned



sociologist at the University of Chicago, as a result of a mammoth in-depth study, found that the most important variable that accounted for school success was parental involvement in the education of their children.

Dr. Latham, based upon research, lists and explains six things parents should do at home to enhance their children's success in school.

1. Talk with children, and the proper use of language; parents are encouraged to speak in complete sentences and use correct English.
2. Provide encouragement to learn; parents are encouraged to do things with their children that are aimed at piquing their curiosity to learn. Visits to museums, attendance at cultural events, and trips to the library are just a few of the free experiences suggested for enriching children's lives.
3. Read daily to and with children; children watch three to five hours of television a day. If parents substitute twenty minutes of television time with reading, it could make a tremendous difference in the child's later reading success.
4. Share parental aspirations for their children; children need to know that their parents expect them to succeed. Parents are encouraged to tell their children that they want them to do well in school because they want them to be happy and someday have the things they want and need to be happy.
5. Provide direct help with studies; parents are encouraged to spend thirty minutes a day with their child in drill and practice exercises which can help dramatically increase achievement.
6. Organize time and space for study and homework; parents are encouraged to provide a task area, homework schedule, and consequences if the child meets or does not meet the expectations related to school participation and achievement.

Parents may need assistance from the school to provide these interventions in the home. Using Dr. Latham's *Power of Positive Parenting* concept as a guide, schools can

follow through on York & Cowan's (2003) suggestion to reach out to parents about parenting skills and school related issues.

Stephanie Vandrick (1999) described a somewhat less structured form of parent education, The Project Innovation Parents Program, which proved very successful. Parents of children in the same grade at the same school met to exchange ideas, discuss concerns, and invite guest speakers. At the beginning of the semester, the group decided on topics and a schedule was agreed upon. Speakers, readings, videos, articles and general discussions were included on the agenda. Each parent brought a different perspective and expertise to the session. One of the few rules was that everything said at group was confidential. The major outcome of this project was that group members felt this was one way to increase communication between parents and the school. Folks were very appreciative of teachers, counselors, librarians, and administration that shared their time with the group.

Parents sharing educational concerns in a support group were found to be a successful networking approach for parent and school partnerships in California (Jenkins, 1991). California established policies and programs to help parents develop skills to use at home that support their children's academic efforts, provide support through community agencies, and remain sensitive to education, ethnic and cultural differences, as well as schedules of working parents.

#### *Parent Involvement = Homework Compliance*

Years of research have confirmed that when families are involved in their children's education, children complete more homework (Trivette & Anderson, 1995; Christenson & Hurley, 1997). The home environment is among the most important influences on academic performance. Researchers have identified three types of parental engagement at home that are consistently associated with positive school performance:

1) actively organizing and monitoring the child's time, 2) helping with homework, and 3) discussing school matters with the child (Finn, 1998).

Involvement with homework offers an opportunity for parents to show an interest and to take a direct role in their child's schooling. Making certain their homework is completed, discussing the specifics of the assignments, checking accuracy, and actively helping complete assignments have all been found to be related to children's academic performance (Finn, 1998). A study referenced by Patricia L. Fry (2001), reports that 87 percent of the children who earned mostly A's and B's said their parents helped them with schoolwork. Forty-nine percent of children with grades lower than C said their parents did not take an interest in what they did at school.

Many students try to avoid doing homework, but teaching research indicates that children who spend more time on regularly assigned meaningful homework do better in school. Together, families and schools can help children develop good study habits. When schools help families to become involved at home and at school, and to assist with completion of homework, students achieve at higher levels (National PTA, 1996).

It is hypothesized that the most likely cause for failed homework assignments is that today's households are overscheduled, overworked and frazzled (Taffel, 2001).

### *Barriers to Parent Involvement*

Earlier studies by Griffith (1996) suggested future research consider providing transportation and day-care to increase parent attendance at school related programs, and so Graciela Elizalde-Utnick (2002) recommended that schools conduct a series of parenting education workshops on a regular basis with services to families to include: 1) transportation, 2) child-care, 3) refreshments, 4) handouts and school-home activities in the family's preferred language, and 5) a lending library of materials should be available. She reminds us that we should accept the premise that both children and their families are

our clients and school psychologists are in a very important position to strengthen the link between home and school. Just a few of her recommended strategies were: 1) communicating with families through notes, telephoning, E-mailing, and conferencing; 2) teaching parents how to monitor homework; 3) educating parents about resources in the community; and 4) including parents as volunteers within the school.

Kessler-Sklar and Baker's (2000) recommendations noted that parents should be encouraged to find time to participate and that schools should provide supports necessary for them to be involved. Schools can be sensitive to pressures facing parents by scheduling parent programs at various times to accommodate working schedules, offer transportation, and provide child care services. School psychologists can take the lead by surveying parents within their districts to compile topics of interest to at least initially attract parents into parenting workshops and gradually offer and include additional topics that become timely and agreed upon.

Functioning with the belief that parents 'choose' not to get involved is a dangerous course of inaction. The Home and School Institute in Washington, DC, under their 'nondeficit' policy, believe that educators should be more concerned with what families have than with what families do not have (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990). This research program devoted time to methods and procedures for helping parents become informed, stay informed, and become functioning members of the school reading curriculum. Their surveys of successful parents' efforts suggested procedures for reaching nonparticipating parents. Although this project was aimed at their reading curriculum, it also proved successful in other schools' parent involvement efforts (Fredericks & Rasinski, 1990).

A brief review of successful outreach efforts noted by Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) includes:

1. Flood parents with an abundance of written and visual information over extended time; one-shot campaigns are not sufficient.
2. Make it a concern of the entire school community.
3. Provide a dose of recognition for parents and faculty for their efforts.
4. Have students write invitations or awards for parents.
5. Encourage projects that involve the entire family.
6. Recruit other community members and solicit their support.
7. Use the telephone as an instrument of 'good' news.
8. Take time to find why parents choose to distance themselves.
9. Provide a number of scheduling options.
10. Ask parents to provide testimonials or comments to be used on newsletters or printed material to send home.

Although parent education programs can be structured classes, they can also include general workshops to address a number of issues as they arise in current news media (child abuse, nutrition, health practices, bullying). Successful, well-attended parent workshops respond to the specific needs of parents rather than to what schools assume they need. Reports by Beebe (1997) included information about creative techniques to support children's learning within the home to enhance the learning at school. Schools in California offered parents workshops with hands-on teaching techniques to use with their children in math and language arts. At these workshops, parents "make and take" educational materials, such as flash cards and board games. Also, many programs encouraged parents to join school committees that make decisions on curriculum policies, parent involvement and the school budget. Several schools provided parents with training to be a volunteer in the school. Sessions included training about school policies on discipline and confidentiality. Family resource centers within schools offered many types of parental supports including childcare for families to

participate in activities, referrals for health, employment or housing needs, as well as parenting classes. Several schools also offered bilingual workshops or classes designed to provide parents with information and ideas about how to help their students at home with homework, and school-trained mentor parents assisted with parenting workshops and other curriculum-related activities. Offering transportation and childcare proved helpful with respect to increasing chances of parental attendance at workshops (Beebe, 1997).

If parents have difficulty attending programs, schools can refer them to numerous web sites, including the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), where they can download materials from training presentations and resource booklets. There are also numerous related links at this particular site. There is no set recipe to develop and promote parent involvement in educational programs. Although strategies and programs may differ in design, each seeks to build trusting school and parent partnerships.

### *School Psychologists and Parent Involvement*

The research does verify parental involvement in school activities and in students' schoolwork as integral to successful student academic performance. As noted, it is necessary to look beyond traditional approaches and consider new ways to accommodate parents in order to establish school-home partnerships to provide information and training.

The National Association of School Psychologists reminds school psychologists that prevention should be a primary function in their practice. Concerns of children have increased such that providing individual intervention is often not feasible. Home-school collaboration to enhance student achievement, behavior, and attendance can be promoted through effective parenting programs. School psychologists can assist many students indirectly through parent programs in an effort to prevent, or at least intervene early with

any number of social, emotional and academic issues (Desrochers, 2006).

Pelco, Ries, Jacobson and Melka (2000) suggested that school psychologists, who are interested in promoting the development of children, should focus their attention on helping educators and families collaborate effectively. A few strategies suggested by this project included activities to improve communication between families and schools, facilitated conferences, information to families regarding grade-level expectations, in-service training to parents about how to help their children with school work, and roles for parents on advisory committees and as volunteers in the classrooms. In this study, the school psychologist played a critical role in planning the development of the partnerships and improving relationships between school-family-community (Pelco et al., 2000).

A sample of 1,000 members was drawn randomly from the 1996 NASP membership register and each was mailed a survey by Pelco et al. (2000) with a cover letter encouraging participation. The Family-School Partnership Survey for School Psychologists was adapted from the work of Joyce L. Epstein and emphasized improving communications between families and schools. School psychologists in this study overwhelmingly supported the general concept of parent involvement in education and viewed this involvement as important for student success. They also expressed support for the belief that 'Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school'. More than one-half of the respondents (59.5%) indicated that they believed school psychologists have the time to help educators involve families and that parents want to be involved more than they are now at most grade levels (Pelco et al., 2000).

Promoting home and school collaboration should be one of the school psychologist's most important roles. School psychologists can be particularly helpful in facilitating collaboration when home and school communication is made difficult due to

stressful circumstances. These activities can include: no working telephone, parent grief or trauma, and language barriers (Prout & Cowan, 2005).

### *Summary*

Those responsible for educating children previously sought to improve students' school achievement by concentrating efforts primarily on the children. Now, as indicated in this literature review, educational professionals are realizing that parents play a crucial role in their children's academic development. As suggested by Epstein (1995), schools and parents working as partners can recognize their shared interests and responsibilities for children's improved educational programs and opportunities.

Research verifies that parental involvement *is* an integral component of successful student achievement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Trivette & Anderson, 1995, Ho, 2002). Research also suggests that school psychologists can organize programs that will develop, nurture and support parental involvement through the establishment of school-parent partnerships (Pelco et al., 2000; Griffith, 1996).

Studies (Epstein, 1995; Griffith, 1996; Ho, 2002) note increased student academic performance when parents, through the local school system, became aware of the importance of their role in their children's learning, and were given skills and opportunities to help their children academically. Schools that are responsive to the needs of parents through friendly and welcoming programs and that consider local concerns and interests reported higher levels of parent involvement that equated to positive student academic achievement (Christenson, 2002; Ho, 2002). Research by Fry (2002) and Finn (1998) confirmed that children maintained higher grades when parents were involved with their schoolwork and that the home environment is among the most important influences on academic performance.



Overall, the research reviewed indicates that school psychologists recognize the importance of family-school partnerships as a force in supporting student success in school. As the role of the school psychologist expands and evolves over the next decade, school psychologists must work to include parent education and support in an effort to facilitate the educational development of children within school districts.

### *Questions for Research*

1. Is there a difference or a similarity between what teachers and parents feel are important issues that should be addressed in parent workshop programs offered by a small rural school district?
2. What accommodations do parents indicate would be necessary in order to attend school-sponsored parent workshop programs in a small rural community?
3. If schools offered parent-preferred topics with requested accommodations (to the best degree possible), to what extent would parents participate?
4. If school-sponsored workshop programs were held, what kind of feedback would parents and teachers offer regarding the effectiveness of the program?
5. If parents attend school-sponsored workshop programs, would there be a noticeable impact on student homework completion rates?

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

In this chapter, information is provided regarding the methodology used to conduct the research study. This study was conducted using data that were collected during a Parent School Involvement pilot project completed as part of the doctoral internship in School Psychology. The project involved collection of survey data from the teachers and parents of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in a rural elementary school, development of a training and information sharing workshop for parents based on the results of the surveys, completion of the parent training program, and collection of data documenting homework completion rates of all the students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms. Because this research study involved an evaluation of the planning, implementation, and outcome of the Parent School Involvement Project, this chapter will include information about methods used to implement the Parent School Involvement Project, as well as the methods used in this study to analyze and interpret the data that were collected during the project.

#### *Participants*

All six teachers of grades 1 and 2 in a rural elementary school completed a survey (see Appendix A) and collected data documenting homework completion rates for all students in the six classrooms. The six female teachers involved in the project have taught in the elementary grades in the district from five to thirty years. The elementary school involved in the project is located in a small, rural town in eastern Pennsylvania. The student population of the school is largely Caucasian, with approximately 10% other ethnicities and an overall low/middle socioeconomic class.

Parents of the students in the six 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms were asked to complete a survey (see Appendix B) and were invited to participate in a parent workshop conducted by the school psychologist assigned to the school. Of the parents invited, 36 initially responded with an interest in parent programs, 28 then responded that they would be agreeable to attend the planned workshop, and 18 actually were in attendance for the training sessions.

The 18 parents who attended the parent training workshop sessions and the six classroom teachers were asked to complete a program satisfaction questionnaire after the training workshops were completed (see Appendix C, D).

### *Overview of Research Design*

The research project was completed in three distinct phases. Phase I involved pre-project program needs data collection, Phase II involved homework data collection, and Phase III involved post-project program satisfaction data collection.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

*Phase I: Pre-Project Needs Data Collection.* All six teachers of the grades 1 and 2 in a rural elementary school completed a survey (see Appendix A) regarding the issues that they felt the school should address with parents through the workshop programs. Parents of all of the students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms also were provided with a similar survey regarding topics they would like addressed in parent workshop programs sponsored by the school. Parents also were asked how the school could assist in making programs most accessible for them. For example, parents were asked what times might be convenient and what locations would be accessible for workshops. Transportation and baby-sitting needs were also addressed. Both teacher and parent responses were

collected anonymously and recorded without specific identifying information, thereby ensuring the confidentiality of data sources.

*Phase II: Homework Data Collection.* The six 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers collected data on each student's homework completion rate for all students in each classroom. Homework data were collected for 12 consecutive weeks. The data collection coincided with the implementation of the parent-training workshop as follows:

*Pre-Training Data Collection:* Homework data were collected for 4 consecutive weeks immediately before to the start of the parent training workshop sessions.

*During-Training Data Collection:* Homework data were collected for 4 consecutive weeks while parent workshops were being conducted. Parents participating in the program attended 4 consecutive weekly parent workshop sessions.

*Post-Training Data Collection:* Homework data were collected for 4 consecutive weeks immediately after the parent training workshop program was completed.

The homework data were collected without specific student identifiers, thus ensuring total confidentiality. Homework data were coded so that the homework data of the students whose parents participated in the training workshops could be separated from the homework data of the students whose parents did not participate in the training workshops.

*Phase III: Post-Project Program Satisfaction Data Collection.* After the post-training homework data were collected, parents who attended the training program and the teachers of the six elementary classrooms were asked to complete surveys regarding their perceptions of the program and its value and effectiveness. Both parent and teacher responses were provided anonymously and recorded without specific identifying information, thereby ensuring confidentiality of collected data.

These anonymously completed surveys provided data for analysis of the current program and suggestions for future programs and/or research.

### *Overview of the Parent School Involvement Project*

In order to foster greater collaboration between parents and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers in a small rural school, the interning school psychologist surveyed parents (see Appendix B) to identify topics of interest and to identify accommodations that might be needed to enable parents to attend workshops. Teachers were also surveyed (see Appendix A) about topics and projected success of school-sponsored parent programs. After analyzing survey data, a four-week parent workshop program was planned.

The final registration note (see Appendix E) with necessary data was sent home through students' homework folders that parents review and sign. An article was included in the local newspaper (see Appendix F) explaining the program and registration information. Based upon returned forms, 28 parents of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students indicated that they would attend the scheduled parent workshop sessions.

Students from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade home economics class, under the supervision of the home economics teacher, were recruited to provide childcare for parents who choose to bring their children to the workshops with them. Refreshments were provided for children and for parents. Topics as per survey results included: strategies to help children with homework, good nutrition, positive parenting, and information to access county agencies. The program included guest speakers from Project Child, county agencies, the school nurse and the elementary school principal. Materials shared included booklets from No Child Left Behind (Helping Your Child With Homework) and pamphlets from the Pennsylvania School Education Association (Reading Aloud to Your Children, TV Viewing, Help Your Child Take Tests).

The first session included ten parents. Given that only 36% of the 28 parents who registered for the workshops were in attendance at the first session, another notice was sent home in student homework folders and telephone calls were made to those who initially registered but did not attend the first session. A few parents offered reasons for

nonattendance that included family illness, change in work shift, and failure to remember the date. The local newspaper (see Appendix G) also covered the first session with an excellent report that included pictures of the program in progress. Attendance for the remaining three sessions increased, with as many as 18 parents participating in each session. Parents seemed very impressed with the childcare program such that some parents, who originally had other childcare plans, brought their children with them to the remaining sessions. A set of literature and information from the program sessions was sent home with students of the parents who registered but did not attend (see Appendix H). Asking these parents for input for possible future sessions was also included.

### *Measures*

The measures used in this study included Parent and Teacher Workshop Needs Surveys, Student Homework Daily Teacher Logs, and Parent and Teacher Post-Workshop Feedback Forms. All data collection measures were constructed by the researcher as part of the doctoral internship experience.

#### *Parent and Teacher Needs Surveys.*

Research (Ho, 2002; Griffith, 1996) stated the importance of analyzing the needs of each district and/or building (and in this case, faculty and parents), about areas of interest and need in an effort to establish partnerships. Griffith (1996) and Finn (1998) documented that even when parents do wish to attend school functions, they often face barriers over which they have little control. It seemed reasonable to postulate that asking parents about specific barriers that might exist and how they thought the school system could help address these barriers would increase the possibility of parents attending workshop programs. In an effort to include teacher and parent interests as advocated by researchers (Trivette & Anderson, 1995; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pelco et al.,

2000), data were collected as per topics of concern that should be included in parent programs.

Epstein (1995) reminds everyone involved that strong school-family partnerships should include communication with family members about homework and school programs. This would be one approach to reflect the way schools care about the children. Therefore, this researcher began the parent survey by asking if parents would in fact be interested in attending workshop sessions.

Asking parents to indicate preferences for topics to be addressed at sessions, possible need for transportation and childcare, and scheduling concerns, was based upon the research by Christenson et al. (1997), Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000), and Ho (2002). Data have shown that parent involvement in education increases when programs are responsive to parents' needs and offer options for parent involvement at home. It is believed that rank-ordering preferences for topics to be addressed as per parent data would attract said parents to attend workshop sessions. Conducting this needs assessment also provided information as to issues of transportation and childcare, as well as preferred days and times to provide programs, in an effort to best meet the needs of this particular group of parents.

To analyze teachers' general beliefs about parent involvement, as suggested by Ho (2002), the teacher survey began by asking if, in fact, schools should offer parent workshop sessions. To further analyze teachers' beliefs about the influence of parent involvement, the survey questioned thoughts about effects on homework completion if parents attended workshops. Christenson et al. (1997) suggest that parents and educators often differ in expectations of goals in the development of children. Asking teachers to rank order topics that should be offered provided data to compare topic preferences of teachers with that of the parents.

The results of Kessler-Sklar and Baker's (2000) national survey of school districts regarding parent involvement included a need for educators to communicate with parents about how to help their children succeed in school and at home. Asking the teachers their impressions of potential effects of parent workshops provided an indication of teachers' beliefs, or lack of beliefs in the program's worth.

#### *Homework Completion Logs.*

Each of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers maintained homework log sheets for the duration of the parent workshop project. On a daily basis, and for each child in his or her classroom, teachers indicated whether or not a homework assignment was due and whether or not the student completed the assignment. The daily homework logs were completed for a total of 12 weeks; 4 weeks prior to the start of the parent workshop sessions, 4 weeks while the weekly parent workshops were being conducted, and 4 weeks after completion of the parent workshop sessions.

#### *Parent and Teacher Parent Workshop Feedback Surveys.*

The satisfaction surveys were also constructed by this researcher to analyze this project, as well as glean potential suggestions for future programs and for research within this area of interest. Comer and Haynes (1991) state that parents can provide perspectives on matters that serve the best interest of their children, and parent insights can complement teachers' skills to strengthen the overall academic program. By surveying both groups, data can suggest similar or different impressions of the analyzed parent workshop program.

Epstein (1995) reminds us that developing school and family partnerships would help children succeed in school. This researcher, then, was interested both in parent and in teacher post-program impressions of this school and family partnership endeavor.



Asking parents if their topics of interest (as indicated on initial survey results) were met, if the childcare provided was adequate, and if they would be interested in future programs, allows for analysis of this program and provides data to plan future sessions.

The study by Griffith (1996) noted that most educators recognize parent involvement in the student's schoolwork as integral to successful student academic performance. The teacher post-survey asked if, in fact, homework completion and parent communication rates increased during and following this parent program. Also, asking teachers if parent programs should continue to be offered in an effort to improve students' academic progress provided an indication of teacher commitment to the concept of parental involvement to improve student academic progress.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

Teacher workshop needs surveys (see Appendix A) were distributed and collected anonymously through the school district in-house mailboxes following a general group meeting to discuss the Parent School Involvement Project. All six of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers completed surveys and returned them anonymously.

Parent workshop needs surveys (see Appendix B) were distributed with a cover letter and directions and a return envelope addressed to the interning school psychologist. All returns were anonymous, as no return addresses were included on envelopes received from the parents, and no parents' names appeared on any of the returned surveys. A total of 45 parents returned surveys. Nine responded 'no' to the first question asking if they would be interested in attending parent workshop sessions to address how they can help their children learn at home; 36 indicated 'yes' to this question.

### *Data Analyses*

Frequency counts were obtained from the workshop needs survey data collected from parents and teachers.

Homework completion rate data that were collected before, during, and after parent workshops were to be analyzed using a 2x3 repeated measures ANOVA design comparing the mean homework completion rates of students whose parents attended the training workshops with completion rates of students whose parents did not attend the training workshops. This analysis could not be completed, however, because of the limited number of parents who attended the parent training workshops. Mean homework completion rate data were then tabled and discussed as part of the analysis of the program evaluation.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

In this chapter, the planning, implementation, and outcome of the Parent School Involvement Project are described and evaluated in relation to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Data collected on student homework completion rates are also discussed in relation to the outcomes of the parent training workshops.

*Research Question 1. Is there a difference or similarity between what teachers and parents feel are important issues that should be addressed in parent workshop programs offered by a small rural school district?*

Tabulated and summarized teacher survey data are provided in Figure 1. The survey data revealed that all six teachers agreed that school districts should offer parent workshops. The results were evenly divided between yes and no as to the belief that parent workshops to promote parental involvement with their children's educational development might increase the rate of homework completion. All six teachers did believe that there would be a positive impact upon overall academic progress if students completed homework assignments. The topics that teachers thought should be offered within parent workshops were: helping with homework (6 teachers), improving the child's self-image (4 teachers), improving parenting skills (6 teachers), bullying (4 teachers), and general school rules and requirements (4 teachers). Four teachers believed that offering childcare would increase parent attendance for these sessions.

### Survey Questions 1, 4, and 5

	Parent Response	
	Yes	No
Q1 - Should school districts offer parent workshop sessions?	6	0
Q4 - Do you personally believe that parent workshops to promote parental involvement with their children's educational development might increase the rate of homework completion?	3	3
Q5 - If students did complete homework assignments, do you think this would impact upon overall academic grades and progress?	6	0
Totals	15	3

### Survey Question 2

Q2 - If yes to Q1, please number in order of preference the topics that you think should be offered from 1 - 5

Teacher	Help with Home-work	Testing Programs & What They Mean	Improve Your Child's Self-image	Improve Your Own Parenting Skills	Saying 'No' to drugs	Bullying	Understand the 'Report Card'	General School Rules & Requirements
T1	3		2	1		4		
T2	2		3	1			4	5
T3	3		2	1	4	5		
T4	5		1	3		4		2
T5	1	5		3			2	4
T6	3	4		1		5		2

### Survey Question 3

Question 3 - In an effort to increase parent attendance, circle what you believe the school district should offer: 1 - Transportation, 2 - Childcare, 3 – Snacks

Teacher	Transportation	Childcare	Snacks
T1		X	
T2	X		
T3		X	
T4			X
T5		X	
T6		X	
	1	4	1

Figure 1. Teacher responses to pre-program survey questions.

Tabulated and summarized parent survey data are provided in Figure 2. Thirty-six parent returns indicated an interest in attending workshops, while nine indicated no interest. Thirty-five listed the school building as a preferred place for programs to be held on weekday evenings with no need for transportation. Eleven listed a possible need for childcare. The following were the top five topics of interest for parent workshops: helping with homework (31 parents), improving the child's self-esteem (33 parents), improving parenting skills (34 parents), what testing programs mean (29 parents) and bullying (21 parents).

Topics of interest reported by both parents and teachers as per survey results include helping with homework, improving the child's self-esteem, improving parenting skills, and bullying. Addressing general school rules was among the top five in the teachers' choices, but ranked rather low (2 parents) on the parent surveys. What testing programs mean was a topic chosen among the top five for parents, but only 2 teachers chose it and it was at the lower end of their preference ranking. Overall, the majority of high-ranking topics of preference did match on the teacher and parent initial surveys.

*Research Question 2. What accommodations do parents indicate would be necessary in order to attend school-sponsored parent workshop programs in a small rural community?*

As per the initial survey results found by this researcher, parents indicated a need for weekday (33 parents) and evening (29 parents) programs, with many (11 parents) needing childcare and only one parent needing transportation. Given that the school district that was the site of the study is within a small community, many parents can walk to the school or drive a very short distance.

Would you be interested in attending workshop sessions?

Yes	36
No	9

Number your preference of topics from 1- 5:

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Helping with homework	20	2	4	3	2
Testing programs and what they mean	3	9	7	5	5
Improving your child's self-image	1	8	10	3	11
Improving your own parenting skills	12	5	3	10	4
Saying 'no' to drugs	1	4	2	5	7
Bullying	2	4	5	4	6
Understanding the 'report card'	1	0	1	1	1
General school rules and requirements	0	0	1	0	1
Other topic not listed:					
less homework for after school activities					
child testing help					
race relations -gettingt along					

Where would you like these programs to be held?

In the school building	35
In a community building (library, borough hall)	1

Day/time preference:

Weekdays	33
Saturdays	3
Mornings	4
Afternoons	3
Evenings	29

Transportation needed:

Yes	1
No	35

Babysitting needed:

Yes	11
No	25

Resources/services/concerns:

Homework hotline	21
Before/after school child care	14
Parent resource center	11
Parent support group	11
Family use of gym/library	21
Grade level parent meetings	20
Other:	7
Pre- school program	

Figure 2. Parent responses to pre-program survey questions.

The researcher did have suggestions available should transportation be an issue. Options could include local bus service tickets and a parent car-pooling plan. Eleven parents indicated a need for childcare and arrangements were made accordingly. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade home economics class, under the direction of the classroom teacher, was very excited to have the opportunity to provide childcare services. The students received extra credit for participation and had the opportunity to apply skills as per childcare being taught in the classroom. Parents and children were so impressed with the childcare service that as parent attendance increased, even parents who initially indicated no need for childcare, did in fact bring their children in to be part of the program.

*Research Question 3. If schools offered parent-preferred topics with requested accommodations (to the best degree possible), to what extent would parents participate?*

Based upon returned forms, 28 parents of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students indicated that they would attend the scheduled parent workshop sessions. The first session included 10 parents. Given that only 36% of the 28 parents who registered for the workshops were in attendance at the first session, another notice was sent home in student homework folders and telephone calls were made to those who initially registered but did not attend the first session. A few parents offered reasons for nonattendance that included: family illness, change in work shift, and forgetting the date. The local newspaper (see Appendix G) also covered the first session with an excellent report that included pictures of the program in progress. Attendance for the remaining three sessions increased, with as many as 18 parents participating in each session. As noted above, parents seemed very impressed with the childcare program, such that some parents who originally had other childcare plans brought their children with them to the remaining sessions.

*Research Question 4. If school-sponsored workshop programs were held, what kind of feedback would parents and teachers offer regarding the effectiveness of the program?*

Teacher post-survey results (see Appendix C, Figure 3) indicated that one or more students in all six teachers' classrooms had mentioned that their parent attended the school workshops. Four teachers expressed a perceived increase in homework completion rate during and after parent programs; two did not. Four teachers reported an increase in positive parent communication; two did not. All six teachers felt that the school district should continue to offer parent workshop programs for the following reasons: "we need to encourage parents to work with us;" "parents do need help and the students did enjoy the childcare program and activities." Additional comments listed included: "kids enjoyed it;" "you did a great job;" and "keep trying."

Parent post-program surveys also were very positive overall (see Appendix D, Figure 4). Using a three point rating scale of 1 (very good), 2 (good), and 3 (so-so), 17 parents indicated with a '1' that homework information was helpful as was the school nurse nutrition information; the remaining parent responded with a '2' in both areas. Fourteen parents said the information shared with them by the representative from child development programs was very good; four parents classified the information as good. Fifteen parents felt the Project Child information was very good; three said it was good. Twelve parents noted that the information and materials from the local welfare office were very good and would be useful to them or to others with whom they planned to share it; six parents said this information was good. Thirteen parents noted that the childcare was very good, and the children did very much enjoy the activities provided; one parent indicated good for both areas. Thirteen parents indicated that they would like to attend future workshops; five parents did not respond to that question. When asked to list ideas for future sessions, topics included: kids' clubs, drugs in the area, report cards, help at home, summer activities, speak with teachers, and more of the same.



Survey Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4		
	Response	
	Yes	No
Q1 - Did any of your students mention that their parents attended a school workshop?	6	
Q2 - Did you see an increase in homework completion during/after the parent workshop program?	4	2
Q3 - Have you had an increase in positive parent communications since the parent program?	4	2
Q4 - Do you feel the school district should continue to offer parent workshop programs?	6	
Q5 - Please explain why? We need to get parents to work with us; kids enjoyed it- parents need more help		
Q6 - Any other comments/suggestions? Kids enjoyed it; you did a great job; keep trying		

**Figure 3. Teacher responses to post-program survey questions.**

Survey Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9			
	Response		
	1	2	3
Q1 - Was the homework issue addressed; info shared helpful?	17	1	
Q2 - Second week info. Jenn B shared from child dev program; useful data?	14	4	
Q3 - Project child presentation by Marci L will be helpful w/parenting issues.	15	3	
Q4 - Nurse Holobetz's nutrition data is helpful.	17	1	
Q5 - Welfare office forms/info will be useful for self and/or others.	12	6	
Q6 - Availability of childcare was helpful in my being able to attend.	13	1	
Q7 - My child did enjoy the activities in the childcare program.	13	1	
Q8 - I would like to attend future workshop sessions: 13 responded 'Yes'; 5 did not respond.			
Q9 - Please list ideas for future sessions to include times/places/topics/any suggestions: Kids' clubs; drugs in the areas; report cards; help at home; summer activities; speak with teachers; more of the same.			

**Figure 4. Parent responses to post-program survey questions.**

An overview of the program, including the needs survey data, the program planning and implementation, data collection, and program evaluation survey results, was shared with the elementary school principal, the school district superintendent, and the school board.

Although the general consensus was that while the group was smaller than hoped for and expected, the overall program was successful. Parents, who did attend, children in the childcare program, local media, and staff who presented and assisted with planning, all responded positively. Follow-up sessions are expected to take place for this group of parents. There is also a projected program for parents of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

*Research Question 5. If parents attend school-sponsored workshop programs, would there be a noticeable impact on student homework completion rates?*

Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize the homework data that the 6 teachers compiled. Table 1 notes homework completion rates for 4 weeks prior to the start of the parent program. Overall, high rates were maintained for all students. Table 2 includes results of homework during the actual 4 weeks the parent program was in progress. Generally, good rates continued for all. Table 3 indicates homework completion rates for 4 weeks following the parent workshop sessions. All in all, homework completion rates were within very acceptable ranges throughout. Data from these 3 tables were used to develop Tables 4 and 5.

Table 1

*Homework Completion Rate*

	Parent Participation	% Completion	Week #				Total
			1	2	3	4	
Grade 1	Did Not Participate	0%	1	1			2
		25%	2				2
		33%		2			2
		40%				1	1
		67%		9		15	24
		75%			5		5
		80%			1	5	6
		90%			2		2
		100%	53	44	48	35	180
	Total		56	56	56	56	224
	Did Participate	33%		1			1
		67%				4	4
		80%				2	2
		90%			1		1
		100%	12	11	11	6	40
	Total		12	12	12	12	48
Grade 2	Did Not Participate	20%			1		1
		33%	1				1
		50%	1				1
		57%				1	1
		67%	1		1		2
		75%		1		1	2
		80%	2		3		5
		82%				1	1
		83%	1				1
		86%				3	3
		88%		3	3		6
		90%		4			4
		91%				1	1
		100%	31	29	29	30	119
	Total		37	37	37	37	148
	Did Participate	50%		1			1
		100%	6	5	6	6	23
	Total		6	6	6	6	24

Table 2

*Homework Completion Rate*

	Parent Participation	% Completion	Week #				Total
			5	6	7	8	
Grade 1	Did Not Participate	50%	1		1	4	6
		75%	4	7	3	2	16
		86%				1	1
		88%	1	1	2		4
		100%	50	48	50	49	197
	Total		56	56	56	56	224
	Did Participate	75%	1				1
		86%				1	1
		88%		2	1		3
		100%	11	10	11	11	43
	Total		12	12	12	12	48
Grade 2	Did Not Participate	0%				1	1
		20%				2	2
		57%			1	1	2
		60%	2	1			3
		67%				1	1
		70%	1				1
		71%			1	1	2
		75%			1		1
		80%	7	2	3		12
		86%				2	2
		87%	2				2
		93%		3			3
		93%	2				2
		100%	23	31	31	29	114
	Total		37	37	37	37	148
	Did Participate	20%				1	1
		40%			1		1
		80%		2			2
		100%	6	4	5	5	20
	Total		6	6	6	6	24

Table 3

*Homework Completion Rate*

	Parent Participation	% Completion	Week #				Total
			9	10	11	12	
Grade 1	Did Not Participate	0%	1	3			4
		38%				1	1
		50%	1				1
		67%			1		1
		75%	2	1	4	5	12
		88%	1		3	2	6
		100%	51	52	48	48	199
	Total		56	56	56	56	224
	Did Participate	88%				2	2
		100%	12	12	12	10	46
	Total		12	12	12	12	48
Grade 2	Did Not Participate	20%	1		1		2
		40%	1	2	1	1	5
		43%				1	1
		60%	1	1		1	3
		70%		1			1
		71%	1				1
		77%	2				2
		80%		4	1		5
		83%			1		1
		86%	3			2	5
		90%		1			1
		100%	28	28	33	32	121
	Total		37	37	37	37	148
	Did Participate	60%	1				1
		80%			1		1
		100%	5	6	5	6	22
	Total		6	6	6	6	24

The homework completion rate data provided by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

*Student Homework Completion Rates by Parent Participation Status*

Parent Participation			Homework Completion Rate		
			Before Workshop	During Workshop	After Workshop
Did Participate	n = 18	Mean	95.61	96.29	98.68
		Median	100	100	100
		Mode	100	100	100
		S.D.	6.30	9.41	3.71
Did Not Participate	n = 93	Mean	93.90	95.58	95.19
		Median	97	100	100
		Mode	100	100	100
		S.D.	8.10	7.46	9.95

As shown in Table 4, homework completion rates during the weeks immediately before the start of the parent workshop sessions, on average, were extremely high for the students of parents who did not participate as well as for the students of parents who did participate. These high completion rates remained in effect both during and after the parent workshop sessions for both groups. The high rate of compliance for both groups across all three-time periods precluded the use of statistical tests to evaluate significant differences between the groups.

Table 5 offers an additional view of the homework completion data from the perspective of homework completion rate change over time.

Table 5

*Homework Completion Rate Change Over Time by Parent Participation Status*

		Homework Completion Rate Change Over Time			
Parent Participation		100% at Pre and Post	Improved from Pre to Post	No Change from Pre to Post	Declined from Pre to Post
Did Participate	n = 18	11 (61%)	6 (33%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)
Did Not Participate	n = 93	32 (34%)	37 (40%)	4 (4%)	20 (22%)

The data presented in Table 5 show that a perfect compliance rate was the norm for the students of the parents who participated in the parent workshop sessions; 61% of the 18 students both started and ended with 100% homework completion rates. Of the remaining students, all but one (33% of the total) demonstrated pre to post gains in homework completion rates; the remaining student maintained a less than perfect, but relatively high (85%) completion rate.

Unlike the first group, the number of students showing 100% compliance with homework requests both prior to and after the parent workshop sessions for the students whose parents did not participate in the workshops was relatively low (34% of total). The second group also included a sizeable percentage of students (22%) whose homework completion rate declined from pre to post time periods. The percentage of

students who improved completion rates from pre to post times (40%) was similar to that observed in the group whose parents did participate in the workshops, as was the proportion of students who maintained the same rate of completion (4%).



## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### *Summary of Results*

The initial surveys reflected highly similar parent and teacher preferences for topics to be addressed at the parent workshop program. Although all teachers did believe districts should offer workshop programs, only half of the teachers felt that these programs would improve student rate of homework completion. Parents preferred weekday, evening programs at the school building and did not indicate a need for transportation, but many did indicate a need for childcare.

A parent workshop program was designed and developed, based on parent and teacher stated needs, and offering the requested accommodation of childcare. Information about the program was disseminated in the community and 28 parents initially indicated that they would attend the program. With only 10 parents in attendance at the first session, a written reminder was sent home with student homework agenda books and telephone calls were made to remind parents that the program was underway. Up to 18 parents then attended the remaining sessions. Local newspaper coverage of the first session also likely helped to boost attendance.

The childcare program was very well received by parents and by children. Parents, who initially indicated no need for childcare, did in fact choose to bring their children to the program to enjoy and participate in the structured activities provided by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade home economics class.

Post program feedback obtained from teachers and parents was very positive. Students did mention to teachers that their parents were attending the program and teachers did indicate that the school should continue to offer programs. More than half of the six teachers perceived an increase in homework rate and an increase in positive parent

communication. Parents indicated that homework information was helpful. The majority of parents in attendance found information from the out of school agencies to be helpful for themselves and as a result shared it with others. The provision of childcare was greatly appreciated. All involved with the program agreed that it was successful, worthwhile, and that follow-up sessions should be offered.

### *Significance of the Results*

In analysis of the homework completion, all students maintained high rates such that the original plan of statistical tests to evaluate possible significant differences between students whose parents attended and students whose parents did not attend the workshop program was not feasible. High homework completion rates remained in effect before, during and after the program for children of the parents who attended the workshops. An analysis of rate of homework completion change over time for students whose parents did not participate in the program did indicate a slightly lower mean homework completion rate during the periods prior to and after workshop sessions, but these completion rates were also relatively high from the start. Additionally, 22% of the children whose parents did not attend the workshops demonstrated declining homework completion rate from pre to post time periods. Children of parents who attended workshop sessions were already doing a good job of complying with homework assignments. These students maintained and improved their good homework habits, while a number of students in the group whose parents did not participate in the workshop program began to decline in compliance rates.

The small sample size and the extremely high homework completion rates of children whose parents attended the workshops precluded the use of formal tests of significance. However, parent, teacher, student, school administration, and community reactions to the project as per survey feedback and individual discussions were very

positive and supportive. This was the first structured parent workshop in this school district and much was learned for consideration of future programs.

### *Limitations*

There were some limitations that greatly affected the outcome of this study and that prevented generalization of the findings to larger parent, teacher, and student groups.

The population that participated was limited to a rural, low socioeconomic, Caucasian group in Eastern Pennsylvania. The study was conducted during the Fall semester of the year. With the start of a new school year, all students *may* be initially more compliant with homework assignments than is the case later in the year. However, offering parent programs during the winter could have posed travel concerns within the area of the school district cited. Workshops held closer to the end of the school year would not have allowed sufficient time to impact overall performance for the school year.

The overall low number of parents who attended the parent training workshops precluded use of statistical analysis of data. Perhaps most unfortunate, parents whose children are least compliant with homework assignments, or who showed a decline in compliance with homework requirements, did not choose to participate in the parent workshop program. Homework rates may have improved through parents' word-of-mouth (i.e. having shared the information presented during sessions). Also, the newspaper articles may have brought attention to the homework issue to all parents.

Involving only six teachers across only two grade levels also had an impact on the potential number of parents who might have attended the parent workshops. However, issues and content being addressed during the parent programs were relatively age and grade specific and inviting parents of older children in higher grades would have reduced the amount of specific, relevant information provided to each parent in attendance.

### *Future Directions*

Workshop programs are being planned for the next school year with the possibility of offering a separate workshop program for parents of older children.

In planning future programs, a possible strategy for improving attendance at the first workshop would be to telephone those parents who registered in advance just prior to the first night of the program. After the first session, parents who attended the first session could be asked to bring other parents with them to future sessions. Offering training for the topics requested by parents in their post-program survey responses should help to ensure attendance at follow-up sessions for the parents who attended the initial workshop series.

Based on the survey results that all involved found the childcare program to be a positive intervention, information disseminated about the parent training programs should emphasize the children's activities being offered. Information about the children's activities provided directly to the students in their classrooms would encourage the children to ask parents to bring them to these after school programs. Indications are that parents will be more likely to attend workshops if their children are excited to be participating in baking, art, reading and social skills activities while the parent sessions are in progress.

School psychologists can take a leadership role in developing parent involvement programs by planning and conducting parent education needs surveys. Such system level activities are an effective means of heeding the warning given by the National Association of School Psychologists that the problems and concerns of elementary school-age children are such that designing individualized interventions to deal with the concerns of every child is not feasible. Through consistent efforts to provide parent education workshops in accordance with the stated needs of parents, school psychologists can indirectly assist many students academically and otherwise.

An outreach of the parent workshop programs concept can also offer teacher in-service programs on strategies for improving parent communications and for assigning 'proper' homework tasks for students.

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## APPENDIX A

**TEACHER SURVEY**

Please complete this survey as per conversation/directions discussed at the faculty meeting. Remember: return anonymously in the in-house mailbox of Carol Mack.

1. Should school districts offer parent workshop sessions?      YES    NO
  
2. If yes, please number in order of preference the topics that you think should be offered from 1-5:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ helping with homework
  - \_\_\_\_\_ testing programs and what they mean
  - \_\_\_\_\_ improving your child's self-image
  - \_\_\_\_\_ improving your own parenting skills
  - \_\_\_\_\_ saying 'no' to drugs
  - \_\_\_\_\_ bullying
  - \_\_\_\_\_ understanding the 'report card'
  - \_\_\_\_\_ general school rules and requirements
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other topic not listed \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. In an effort to increase parent attendance, circle what you believe the school district should offer:
 

transportation      childcare      snacks

\*other sites beside the school building-- give example where \_\_\_\_\_

\*other suggestions \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Do you personally believe that parent workshops to promote parental involvement with their children's educational development might increase the rate of homework completion?    YES            NO
  
5. If students did complete homework assignments, do you think this would impact upon overall academic grades and progress?    YES            NO

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

## APPENDIX B

**PARENT SURVEY**

Parent involvement programs are fun, and most of all, they help our children perform better in school. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and return it in the addressed/stamped envelope provided.

1. Would you be interested in attending workshop sessions on how parents can help their children learn at home? YES NO

2. If you circled yes, please number your preference of topics in order from 1- 5:

- \_\_\_\_\_ helping with homework
- \_\_\_\_\_ testing programs and what they mean
- \_\_\_\_\_ improving your child's self-image
- \_\_\_\_\_ improving your own parenting skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ saying 'no' to drugs
- \_\_\_\_\_ bullying
- \_\_\_\_\_ understanding the 'report card'
- \_\_\_\_\_ general school rules and requirements
- \_\_\_\_\_ other topic not listed \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where would you like these programs to be held? (choose one)

- \_\_\_\_\_ in the school building
- \_\_\_\_\_ in a community building (library, borough hall)

4. On what days would you like programs scheduled? (choose one for each)

on weekdays or Saturday

At what time of the day would you like programs scheduled?

mornings afternoons or evenings

5. If you are interested in attending workshops, is transportation a concern?

YES NO

6. If you are interested in attending workshops, are babysitting needs a concern?

YES

NO

7. Circle the kinds of resources/services you would like to see available at the school:

homework hotline

before/after school child care

parent resource center

parent support group

family use of gym/library

grade level parent meetings

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your valuable time in completing this survey! As explained in the cover letter, results will be mailed to all grade 1 and 2 parents in about 30 days.**

## APPENDIX C

**POST-PARENT PROGRAM TEACHER FEEDBACK**

Please complete and anonymously return to Carol Mack's in-school mailbox.

1. Did any of your students mention that their parents attended a school workshop?

YES

NO

2. Did you see an increase in homework completion during/after the parent workshop program?      YES              NO

3. Have you had an increase in positive parent communications since the parent program?      YES              NO

4. Do you feel the school district should continue to offer parent workshop programs?      YES              NO

5. Please explain why?

6. Any other comments/suggestions-----

As Always, thank you for your cooperation throughout!

## APPENDIX D

**PARENT POST-WORKSHOP SURVEY**

Thank you for attending the parent workshop sessions last month. Please anonymously complete this survey and return it to the school.

On a scale of 1 (very good), 2 (good), or 3 (so-so):

1. The 'homework' issue was addressed i.e. information shared was

1                      2                      3

2. Second week info Jenn shared re: child development program was useful.

1                      2                      3

3. Project child presentation by Marci L. will be helpful with parenting issues.

1                      2                      3

4. Nurse Holobetz's nutrition data is helpful.

1                      2                      3

5. Welfare office forms/info. will be useful for self and/or others.

1                      2                      3

6. Availability of childcare was helpful in my being able to attend.

1                      2                      3

7. My child did enjoy the activities in the childcare program.

1                      2                      3

8. I would like to attend future workshop sessions.

YES                      NO

9. Please list ideas for future sessions to include times/place/topics/any suggestions:

Thank you sincerely for taking the time to attend our program.

Carol Mack, School Psychologist



APPENDIX E  
**AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**PARENT WORKSHOP PROGRAMS**  
 for parents of grades 1-2 students

Welcome to the '05'06 school year. I had sent a parent survey home May, 2005 concerning upcoming Fall '05 parent programs. Well, here they are.....

- 9-29-05 A review of the parent survey results; explain/ discuss the current 4 week program; grades 1-2 homework issues: suggestions, guidelines, and strategies to make homework go smoothly.
  - 10-6-05 Parenting skills for 2005 and beyond. School Nurse Holobetz will share Information re: good nutrition and young children.
  - 10-13-05 Project Child speaker's bureau representative will present: a forum promoting positive care-taking and parenting.
  - 10-20-05 County agencies will share information about services available for youth and parents: food/ nutrition, insurance coverage, counseling, finances, family support, crisis assistance and more.
- Closing comments and review of this 4 week program to include an evaluation survey and future program options.

**SNACKS, CHILDCARE, HAND-OUTS**  
 and more at each session: 6:30 to 8 P.M.

**HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US---PLEASE RETURN BOTTOM PORTION**

Questions or Comments- contact Carol Mack, School Psychologist:

544-9131 X1230 or through the \_\_\_\_\_ guidance office.

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ grade \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan to attend the parent workshop programs      yes      no

Will access childcare @ \_\_\_\_\_      yes      no

Questions/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Wed. 9/28/05 POTTSTVILLE (PA.) REPUBLICAN &amp; HERALD

# School offers parenting help holding workshops

BY TERESA SCHARTEL

Staff Writer

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The

Area Elementary School has decided to include parents in their curriculum by holding workshops that concentrate on the difficulties of parenting in the 21st century.

Carol Mack, the Intermediate Unit school psychologist assigned to the elementary school, is the coordinator of the workshops.

In May, Mack sent home surveys to parents of kindergarten, first- and second-grade students, asking them what their concerns are about their children's academic performance. From the results of the survey, Mack has planned workshops addressing parents' concerns.

The school district is offering four workshops to parents of first-, second- and third-grade students. The first will take place Thursday, and the rest will follow on Oct. 6, 13 and 20. All workshops will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the school cafeteria.

The workshops are devised to give parents the tools they need to assist their children with homework, improve academic performance and explain what children at the elementary level need emotionally and physically.

The May survey showed that parents were most interested in how they can help

their children with homework, improve their parenting skills and their children's self-esteem, and also learn more about the importance of standardized testing.

During the first workshop on Thursday, Mack will review the surveys with the parents and explain how they can help their children with homework. Mack will distribute a book, titled "Helping Your Child With Homework," to parents. It was provided by No Child Left Behind services.

Subsequent workshops will feature guest speakers from local agencies, including Jennifer Berkenstock from Child Development Inc.; Marcie Lightwood, the project coordinator of Project Child in Lehigh Valley; and Karen Stone from the state Department of Welfare. School nurse Angela Holobitz will also make a presentation.

Any parent interested in attending the workshops can contact the elementary school at 429-2716 or send a note to their child's teacher requesting more information.

Eighth-grade students will fulfill a requirement for their home economics class by providing child care for parents whose young children need to accompany them to the workshops. Activities will be set up in the school library and home economics rooms. Homework assistance will be provided.



# Parents learn skills to motivate students

Homework topic of 1st

BY THERESA SCHARTEL

Staff Writer  
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workshop

Mack focused her discussion on the time children and parents spend together. "Statistically, 16 percent of children's waking hours are spent in school. The rest of the time they are at home or taking part in other activities," Mack said.

According to Mack, the correlation between parenting and homework is obvious.

Parents were provided with folders containing two pamphlets on parenting and homework, handouts explaining the importance of homework and providing creative ideas on how to enforce education at home, and a book created by No Child Left Behind.

Please see WORKSHOP Page 5



Carol Mack, Intermediate Unit Area Elementary/Middle School, discusses ways parents can help their children with their school needs at a workshop Thursday.

NICK MEYER/Staff Photo

# Parents learn skills to help kids

WORKSHOP/From Page 3

Behind services giving tips on homework assistance.

Mack also discussed some inventive lessons parents can use at home to reinforce classroom lessons, such as allowing children to put groceries away and asking them to explain the importance of why some items are refrigerated and others are not.

Showing children how to balance a checkbook is a good way to explain the importance of math in everyday life.

Mack also told parents to encourage children to play outside. She said that children excessively play video games and watch television.

She suggested games such as hop scotch, red light, green light and jacks.

"These are games that force children to think, they incorporate elements of the outside world," Mack said, noting that hop scotch and jacks involve counting, and red light, green light incorporates colors.

Mack also gave a set amount of time that homework should take to be completed.

After speaking with teachers, Mack said that a first-grader should take 15 minutes for homework, a second-grader should take 20 minutes, and a third-grader should take 25 to 30 minutes.

Working in a well-lit room and making a project box were some of Mack's other suggestions.

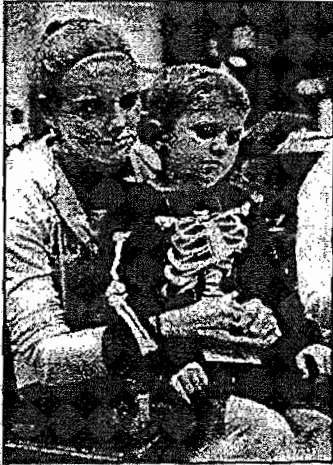
Projects boxes contain all the items children may need to do homework, including pencils, glue, markers and tape.

In May, Mack sent home surveys to

parents of kindergarten, first- and second-grade students asking them about their concerns about their children's academic performance.

From the results of the survey, Mack planned workshops addressing parents' concerns.

Other workshops will be held on April 9, 13 and 20 and will feature speakers from local agencies including Jennifer Berkenstock from Child Development Inc., Marcie Lightfoot, the project coordinator of Project Child in Lehigh Valley, Karen St. John from the state Department of Welfare and school nurse Angela Holobiz.



and  
storytime.

an eighth-grader  
3, are attentive during



After painting, cleanup is a must for  
4, helped by



With guidance from  
takes a stab at writing  
her name.

# Lessons apply to life

## program has child care

BY TERESA SCHARTEL  
Staff Writer  
tschartel@republicanherald.com

graders at

Eighth-



Elementary/Middle  
School are  
gaining  
hands-on  
baby-sit-  
ting expe-  
rience.

It's  
through participation in a  
child-care unit held at the  
school Thursday evenings  
throughout October.

The unit is aimed at al-  
lowing more parents who  
have small children to be  
able to attend a series of  
parent workshops also being  
held at the school.

According to Marilyn E.  
DiCello, home economics  
teacher, the school has  
Please see LESSONS/Page 4



ANDY MATSUKO/Staff Photo

Storytime is one of the activities performed  
during a child care program by  
Area Elementary/Middle School home econo-  
mics eighth-graders. They watch children

whose parents attend regular workshops at  
the school. First-grader  
finds the book eighth-grader  
is reading interesting.

6.



ANDY MATSKO/Staff Photo

The Elementary/Middle School holds parent workshops Thursday evenings and the school's home economics students and staff provide child care for parents who attend the workshops. Hand-painting is among the activities in the child-care unit and is a hit with who's guided by eighth-grader

# Lessons apply to life

**LESSONS** From Page 1  
received a federal grant to fund the child care unit, which enables the workshops to be more accessible to parents.

Baby-sitting is the first unit students tackle in their home economics class, said. She has coordinated activities for the child-care unit with instructional support teacher Susan C. Miller and fifth-grade teacher John A. Walsh.

DiCello said that during the class' baby-sitting unit, students learn about developmental age qualities, what they should charge when baby-sitting, safety procedures, activities for children based on age, how to choose a family to baby-sit for, caring for an infant versus caring for a toddler and what kinds of food are nutritious snacks for young children.

"Students gain practical experience by taking home economics classes," DiCello said. "I believe that working in practical situations teaches them to think on their feet."

The baby-sitting unit is also

touched on during the school's after-school program, which runs for a month and a half each semester. This year the after-school program started on Oct. 3 and will run to Nov. 21. It is held from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. four days a week.

In the program, children receive homework help, tutoring and work on computer skills. However, Miller said they also learn CPR, first aid and other skills they might need to apply when caring for a child.

Six students volunteer every week to baby-sit during the parent workshops that are held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. While parents are attending the workshop, the students walk the children — the youngsters usually range in age from 2 to school age — through a routine of four activities. There is story time, during which the children are read a book, plus a craft activity, physical exercise and snack time.

DiCello said the baby-sitting unit is useful because it teaches students skills that they will use when they are adults and have families of their own,

or they may use the skills for careers they choose.

Some students who volunteered during last week's workshop expressed interest in becoming educators.

Eighth-grader said that she has thought about working with children in the future, perhaps as a teacher. She decided to participate in the program because she likes being around younger children and helping them.

Fellow eighth-grader said, "I've never baby-sat before, but I like being around little kids. There is a part of me that has always wanted to be a teacher."

The home economics class is also comprised of units pertaining to cooking, sewing and budgeting.

During the budgeting unit, students are asked to think about possible future occupations. DiCello said that for most students, the semester comes full circle when they have to think about what they want to do as an adult, and realize that everything they learn in home economics applies to living an adult lifestyle.

HI---INITIALLY YOU HAD INDICATED THAT YOU WOULD ATTEND THE PARENT WORKSHOP SESSIONS.

ATTACHED PLEASE FIND INFORMATION AS PER HOMEWORK AND RELATED ISSUES THAT WAS PART OF THAT PROGRAM.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE BOTTOM PORTION OF THIS FORM IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO ASSIST WITH FUTURE PLANNING OF PARENT WORKSHOPS.

THANK YOU,  
Carol Mack, School Psychologist

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I could not attend because: \_\_\_\_\_

For future sessions would a different time/place be helpful? If so, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in other topics? Please list.....

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*Please note any other suggestions on the back of this paper. THANKS!*